

meantime, I want you to remember that you're a citizen of the greatest country on the face of the Earth. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless America. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:39 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks at a Reception for Senatorial Candidate John R. Thune *September 24, 2002*

Thank you all for coming. "Senator," thanks for that kind introduction. There should be no doubt where my allegiance is in South Dakota, and that's with John Thune, the next Senator from the State of South Dakota.

There's a lot of reasons why I think John ought to be in the Senate, starting with the fact that he really married well. [*Laughter*] Probably some of you haven't had a chance to meet Kimberley, but you'll know it's true when I say he married above himself. [*Laughter*] They've got a fabulous family. Every time I've been to South Dakota, they've been there to greet me. And there's no doubt in my mind where his priorities lay, and that is with his family and his faith and his State and his country. He's a man of deep value, a good, honorable guy. He's a man who will bring credit to the United States Senate, and I'm proud to endorse him and to work as hard as I possibly can to see that he becomes the next Senator from South Dakota.

Kimberley was wise enough to skip my speech, and so was Laura. [*Laughter*] She sends her affection to the Thunes and joins me in thanking you all for being here to support this good fellow.

Laura is doing great, by the way. She was a, you know, public school librarian when I married her, and she didn't like politics and really didn't like politicians, if the truth be known. [*Laughter*] She liked a few of them, but she could never envision herself being involved in the political process. And thank goodness she said yes when

I asked her to marry me. A lot of people are wondering why she did that. But she's doing a fabulous job as our First Lady. She sends her best.

I want to thank some Senators here who are anxiously awaiting the arrival of John Thune. I know Trent Lott is here, soon to be majority leader of the Senate. I know Bill Frist is here, from Tennessee, in the back. Thank you for coming, Bill. I see my friend Larry Craig is here. I appreciate you coming, Larry.

I know a lot of Members of Congress who are here because they know John and like him a lot. I want to thank all the supporters and organizers who have helped in the past and are helping this time again. I appreciate you all coming. It's good to be with friends and people who care deeply about the future of our country—something we all have got to be concerned about, the future of our country.

One of the things I like about John is that he's a fellow who can get things done on behalf of the citizens of South Dakota and the citizens of our country. As you know, a lot of folks are suffering out there as a result of a drought. And in Washington there's always a lot of talk about trying to get something done, and a lot of times something doesn't get done in this town.

But thanks to his leadership, his willingness to represent the farmers and ranchers of South Dakota, he worked with Ann Veneman and my administration to get immediate relief to people who hurt. So while Washington was talking, John Thune was

doing on behalf of the people of South Dakota.

Not only is the drought the challenge, but so is our economy. We've got people who want to work and can't find work, and we've got to do something about it. And I want somebody in the Senate who understands the role of Government, and that's not to create wealth but an environment in which the entrepreneur can flourish and in which small businesses can grow to be big businesses, an environment in which we understand the role of Government is to lay the foundation for growth. And that's what we have been doing here in Washington, much to the objections of some.

I want you to remember back during the tax cut debate. I said—and John agreed—that we needed to let people keep more of their own money. When the economy began to slow, it was important to let people have more of their own money so they could spend, and when they would spend, somebody would produce a good or a service. And when somebody produced the good or service to meet their demand, somebody is more likely to find work.

We got the tax cut passed. But because of the rules of the Senate—and this one's a hard one to explain. It's a hard one to explain in South Dakota, and it's a hard one to explain in Crawford, Texas. But because of the rules of the Senate, that tax relief plan we passed goes away in 10 years—9 years from now. And that creates uncertainty in the economy. It's hard to plan when the Tax Code shifts around. It's hard to—it's hard to envision a future that's stable. And people need a stable environment in order to create jobs. For the sake of economic vitality, for the sake of job creation, I need people in the Senate who will make the tax cuts permanent, a permanent part of our Tax Code.

And that includes permanently repealing the death tax. That should be an issue in South Dakota. There's a lot of farmers and ranchers who are going to get run off their farms and ranches if we don't repeal the

death tax forever. We don't need people playing games with the death tax to mask their desire to keep the death tax in place. When this man says he's going to support us to get rid of the death tax, he means it. It's an important voice to have in the Senate.

As well, we've got a problem with fiscal sanity in Washington. Every idea is a good idea up here. The problem is, every idea costs billions of dollars. The Senate hasn't passed a budget. And when you don't have a budget, it is—it's liable to encourage excessive spending. And if there's excessive spending, it's going to serve as a drag on job creation.

If you're interested in job vitality, it's important for Washington, DC, to be fiscally sound with the people's money, to spend money on priorities and only spend money on priorities. And John Thune understands that. We need more fiscal sanity in the United States Senate, and he will bring that. We proposed—my budget I proposed shows us a way to get back to balance after a difficult period of time, after an attack and an emergency and a recession. And some in the Senate hadn't heard that message. But John Thune will hear it. He understands what I understand: The money we spend up here is not the Government's money. The money we spend up here is the taxpayers' money, and we need to watch it carefully.

We need an energy bill, for the sake of job creation as well as for national security purposes. We need a terrorism insurance bill to get our hardhats working again and, by the way, a bill which will reward hard work but not reward trial lawyers.

We need commonsense thinking when it comes to our national forests. John understands this. Larry understands this. We've allowed our forests to build up like giant piles of kindling, as a result of backward environmental policy. We need commonsense practices. We need commonsense thinking in the United States Senate. And that's the kind of thinking John will bring.

And we also need to have people up there who understand the true challenge we face in America, and the challenge we face is the security of our homeland. My most important job, I believe the most important job of our Congress, is to work together to make the homeland secure, is to do everything we possibly can to prevent an enemy which hates America from attacking us again.

Oh, I know some would wish the enemy would go away, but they're not. You see, they hate freedom, and we love freedom. They can't stand what we stand for. But we're going to stand for what we stand for forever. See, we love the fact that people can worship freely in America. We love the fact that people can come to our country and realize their dreams. We love the fact that people can debate freely. We love a free press.

We love everything there is about freedom, and we also value each life in our country and around the world. Everybody matters. Everybody has worth. Everybody counts. But that's not the way the enemy thinks. They don't believe in every life matters. They're willing to take innocent life in the name of a hijacked religion.

And so we've got a big task ahead of us today and tomorrow and down the road, and that is to defend our freedoms. And that's why I asked the Congress to respond to this notion of setting up a Department of Homeland Security. We've got to be able to better coordinate between our agencies the defense of our homeland. If the number one priority is homeland defense, it ought to be the number one priority of every agency involved with homeland defense. And the best way to ensure that happens is to put them under one umbrella and then give the President, this President and future Presidents, the ability and the flexibility to move people at the right place at the right time in order to defeat an enemy and to defend America.

And yet right now in the Senate, the Senate feels like they want to micromanage

the process—not all Senators but some Senators. They want to have a pile of books this thick that will hamstring future administrations as to how best to protect our homeland, and I'm not going to stand for it.

I appreciate John's vote on a good homeland security bill. And the Senate must hear this, because the American people understand it. They should not respond to special interests. They ought to respond to this interest: Protecting the American people from a future attack.

Finally, you all know this—John understands this, and I hope you do as well—the best way to defend our homeland is to hunt the killers down, one person at a time, and to bring them to justice. And that's what we're going to do. That's what this country is going to do. And that's why I asked the Congress to pass the largest increase in defense spending since Ronald Reagan was the President.

I did so for two valid reasons. One, our people deserve the best pay. If you put the uniform on and you go into harm's way, you've got to have the best pay, the best training, and the best possible equipment. And secondly, I asked for that bill because I wanted to send a clear signal to everybody that we're in this deal for the long pull, that there's not a moment in time where we say, "Well, gosh, we quit," that this country will do whatever it takes to defend our freedoms.

And one of the things I just call upon the Congress to do before they go home is to get the defense bill to my desk. It passed the House. It passed the Senate. It's now clogged up in a conference committee. For the sake of sending the right signal, for the sake of doing what's right for our military, for the sake for doing what's right for planning, for prosecuting this war, I need a defense bill before they go home.

Our job is to keep the peace. Our job is to leave a legacy of freedom for our children and our children's children. My

job is to remain firm and to uphold the doctrine, "Either you're with us, or you're with the enemy." That still stands. The doctrine says, "If you harbor a terrorist and feed a terrorist, you're just as guilty as a terrorist." That still stands.

It also stands that we must not allow leaders who develop the world's worst weapons to blackmail the United States or our friends and allies, to hold us hostage. I went to the United Nations because I want the United Nations to have heard not only the case about Saddam Hussein—the fact that he has weapons of mass destruction, the fact that he gassed his own people, the fact that he terrorized his neighborhood, the fact that he has terrorized his own people much worse than Mr. Milosevic did. I also made it clear to the United Nations, we want, for the sake of peace, for the United Nations to be an effective body. We don't want it to be a League of Nations. We want it to be a body that can—that has got the backbone necessary to keep the peace. I'm willing to work with nations in the United Nations to not only strengthen that institution but to hold Saddam Hussein to account.

But if the United Nations won't act, if they won't disarm Saddam Hussein, if they won't expose this liar for what he is, then the United States and other friends of ours around the world will do just that. We owe it to our children, and we owe it to our children's children.

And I want to thank Members of both parties in the United States Congress for working to develop a strong resolution and strong signal to the world that this Nation is determined. We love peace. Military is not our first choice. But nevertheless, we will not let the challenges that we face go unheeded. We understand the reality. We understand the nature of the man with which we deal. Everybody matters. Every life counts, including those who have been tortured and killed and suppressed in Iraq.

See, we believe in freedom. We believe in freeing people while we free ourselves

from threats. I understand the—I understand that the world is—some in the world are—don't see it that way. But if we have to and when we succeed, the world will thank the United States and our friends and allies for making our world more secure and more peaceful.

I appreciate the fact that people say to me, you know, "How are things going?" And my answer very quickly is, "Great, because we're the greatest nation on the face of the Earth. We are showing the world the true nature of our country, that we're tough when we have to be tough, and we're compassionate at the same time."

I met with a group of Afghan women who are involved in their Government. I reminded them what I like to remind people all across our country, particularly the youngsters, that we went into their country to uphold doctrine. But we also went in to liberate people. Ours is a nation which does not conquer. We have no territorial designs or desires. But we love freedom.

It made me feel so great to see 14 women, who had lived under the clutches of one of the most barbaric regimes in the history of mankind, sitting in the Roosevelt Room at the White House, talking about how to enhance education, asking us never to leave until they're secure—which I promised them we wouldn't—talking about peace, talking about a hopeful future, thanks to the resolve of the United States of America and her people.

I also want you to know that not only will that kind of good come out of the evil done to us, but I passionately believe not only can we achieve peace in places in the world which have quit on peace, but we can address some of our own problems at home in a way we have never addressed them before.

There are pockets of despair and hopelessness in this country; there just are. There are people who hurt. There are people who are addicted. There are people who say, when somebody says "the American Dream," they don't know what they're

talking about. See, they've given up on the American experience. But that can be overcome as our fellow citizens love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves.

You see, the enemy hit us. But they didn't know who they were hitting. I like to say that they probably thought that after 9/11/2001, we would file a lawsuit or two. [Laughter] What they found is, they found they touched a nerve in this country, a nerve that says we'll defend our values at any cost.

But also they touched a nerve where Americans have taken a step back and realize that being a patriot is more than putting your hand over your heart and saying the Pledge of Allegiance. Being a patriot is helping a fellow American who hurts, mentoring a child, starting a Boy Scout or Girl Scout troop, being involved with a church or synagogue and mosque program necessary to feed the hungry or to find shelter

for those who have no place to live. That's the America that is now showing its face to the world. Out of the evil done to America will come incredible good, because our people are so good, and we are so great as a nation.

I want to thank you for helping John. He'll be a great United States Senator. Thank you for coming, and may God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:18 p.m. in the Ballroom at the Willard Inter-Continental Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Kimberley Thune, wife of Representative Thune; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and former President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Representative Thune was a candidate for the U.S. Senate in South Dakota.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Alvaro Uribe of Colombia and an Exchange With Reporters *September 25, 2002*

President Bush. Thank you. Welcome. Here's what we're going to do. I am going to give a statement; President Uribe will give a statement. I will call upon an American journalist; the President will call upon a Colombian journalist. I will then call upon another American journalist; the President will call upon a Colombian journalist. And then you all will leave. [Laughter]

Mr. President, welcome to the Oval Office. It is my honor to welcome this good man, this friend of freedom, to the Oval Office. I have been incredibly impressed by his vision for a peaceful Colombia and a prosperous Colombia. He's a man who told the people of his country that he would work to eradicate terrorism, narcotrafficking. The Colombian people be-

lieve him, and so do I. And today I want to affirm our country's strong desire to help the Colombian Government and the Colombian people prosper and to live in freedom. I appreciate his leadership. I appreciate his strength of character. I appreciate his clear vision.

So, Mr. President, *bienvenidos a la Oval Office, aqui en la Casa Blanca.*

President Uribe. Muchas gracias, Presidente.

[At this point, President Uribe continued in Spanish, and no translation was provided.]

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Would you like that translated into English?